

The Catholic Archdiocese of Suva

Policy Statement for Ministry to Minors

Preamble

As leaders in the Church founded by Christ, priests, deacons and lay ministers within our parishes and institutions must always seek to uphold Christian values and conduct. In addition to following the Gospel and its mandates, these individuals will want to act properly at all times in the light of contemporary society and its needs. This Policy does not presume to provide answers to all the ethical questions facing Church leaders. What it does establish is a set of general guidelines and boundaries when ministering to minors. Many items mentioned in this document are applicable to ministry with adults, but in this Policy Statement and related documents (see below) we are addressing explicitly proper contact with persons under 18 years of age.

This Policy Statement should be read in conjunction with *The Code of Conduct When Working With Minors*, *Guidelines for Ministry to Minors* and *Guidelines for Pastoral Counselling With Minors* (**related documents**) which have been developed to help create a safe, appropriate and Christian environment for minors and their relationships with adults involved in Church ministry.

The Policy Statement and related documents are applicable to all persons employed by or volunteering in any of the parishes and institutions of the Archdiocese of Suva. So that it is clear who must be aware of the contents of this document, the addresses include, but are not limited to: priests, religious (men and women), deacons, pastoral coordinators, school/program administrators, teachers, catechists, youth ministers, support staff, custodial staff, coaches, school program volunteers, seminarians serving internships and lay theology students.

Background

This Policy Statement is adapted from the Oakland Diocese, CA that was written and published in 2004. It was developed in cooperation with the Oakland Diocesan Presbyteral Council with the assistance of other protocol documents from other dioceses. It is to be considered a working document that will be revised as needed under the direction of the Archbishop of Suva.

Responsibility for adherence to this Policy Statement and related documents rests with those involved in Church ministry or service themselves. It is anticipated however, that disregard of this Policy and related documents by such persons will be dealt with by the appropriate employing/appointing organization (e.g. the parish, the religious order, the diocesan bishop). Remedial action may take various forms from counseling to removal from ministry.

The conduct of ministers and employees, both public and private, has the potential to inspire and motivate people or scandalize and tear down their faith. They must be aware of the responsibilities that accompany their ministry. They must also know that God's goodness and graces support them in their ministry.